

ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAM

General Information

Announcement Type:	Initial Announcement
Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number:	EPA-ORD-25352
Posted Date:	October 8, 2004
Original Due Date for Applications:	December 6, 2004 To be considered timely, initial proposals must be received by 3:00 p.m. local time on 12/06/04 from the U.S. Postal Service or other commercial delivery service.
Current Due Date for Applications:	December 6, 2004 To be considered timely, initial proposals must be received by 3:00 p.m. local time on 12/06/04 from the U.S. Postal Service or other commercial delivery service.
Archive Date:	(To be completed by GAD)
Category of Funding Activity:	Environment
Expected Number of Awards:	1 award
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$ 20,000 with the option to extend this grant without further competition for up to two additional years, providing up to a total of \$20,000 each additional year.
Award Ceiling:	\$ 60,000 for maximum possible 3 years.
Award Floor:	\$ 20,000 for minimum possible year.
CFDA Number:	66.510 ORD Surveys, Studies, Investigations and Special Purpose Grants
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement:	None

Eligible Applicants

Assistance awards under CFDA 66.510 are available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the U.S., including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, other public or private nonprofit institutions, and in some cases, individuals who have demonstrated unusually high scientific ability.

Federal Agency Name

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development
Attn: Kathie Stephens-Landers
US Environmental Protection Agency
National Exposure Research Laboratory
944 E. Harmon Ave.

Las Vegas, NV 89119

Description

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA or the Agency) is offering financial assistance to technically qualified organizations interested in working to address issues affecting the quality of the nations's environmental monitoring data, how monitoring services are procured and provided, and other activities to ensure that the United States maintains a healthy, technically competent, and professionally sound commercial environmental laboratory system. This includes developing and presenting training courses, guidance materials, and other technical material.

Agency Contact Person for Electronic Access Problem

Walter Stutts, Phone: 513/569-7487 Email: stutts.water@epa.gov

Link to Full Announcement (Note: Leave blank. GAD will complete.)

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Title of Assistance Opportunity:

Environmental Laboratory Improvement Support Grant

Background:

On February 17, 2004, the Science Advisor of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL), the trade association of independent scientific and engineering testing laboratories, signed an agreement to work together to address issues affecting the monitoring community in the United States. As part of its efforts to implement this agreement, the Agency is willing to provide some financial and technical support to technically competent organizations in order to:

- Promote the performance approach to environmental monitoring;
- Eliminate barriers that stand in the way of removing concerns about the quality of our nation's environmental testing laboratories and the credibility of the data emanating from these laboratories; and
- Improve the professionalism of the monitoring community by jointly developing and presenting training necessary to increase the expertise of both government and private sector scientists, engineers, and technicians.

Funding Priorities/Focus:

The Agency is offering financial assistance to technically qualified organizations interested in working to address issues affecting the quality of the nation's environmental monitoring data, how monitoring services are procured and provided, and other activities to ensure that the United States maintains a healthy, technically competent, and professionally sound commercial environmental laboratory system. This includes developing and presenting training courses, guidance materials, and other technical material.

EPA anticipates providing funding in the amount of \$20,000 for a year with an option to extend this grant without further competition for up to two years, providing up to a total of \$20,000 each additional year to assist the environmental monitoring community begin work in the following general areas:

- development of training courses to foster the implementation of the performance approach in the environmental monitoring community;
- development of systems that can be used by the laboratory community to identify situations where available testing methodology is not good enough to measure the properties for which it is generally being used;
- development of mechanisms for the laboratory community to assist federal, state, and voluntary consensus standards bodies (VCSB) developing new monitoring methodologies and in conducting studies to evaluate newly developed methods;
- development of training courses and materials to assist generators and users of environmental data in factoring the inherent uncertainty of measurement into the

- decision making process;
- development and presentation of programs aimed at users of environmental data to promote and strengthen a culture of quality and ethics within the environmental monitoring community;
- development of courses, model contracts, data evaluation checklists, and other tools and materials aimed at assisting purchasers of environmental monitoring services in procuring services based on quality and their information needs rather than on methodology;
- assisting states, federal agencies, and the private sector in fostering a national environmental laboratory accreditation system that is characterized by quality, national consistency, acceptance by generators, and purchasers of environmental data and of federal and state regulatory agencies; and
- ensuring that the nation's commercial environmental monitoring industry is ready, willing, and able to step-in and assist federal, state, and local agencies, when events occur that require the analysis of difficult or large numbers of environmental samples within a short period of time.

GPRA Goals, Objectives:

The specific Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) Goals, Objectives and Sub-objectives that relate to this RFIP include:

GPRA Goal: 5.0 Compliance and Environmental Stewardship
 Objective(s): 5.4 Enhance Science and Research
 Sub-objective(s): 5.4.2 Conducting Research

Statutory Authority for Award of Assistance: This research is authorized under §8001 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), §104 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), §1442 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), §10 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), or §103 of the Clean Air Act (CAA).

II. Award Information

Amount and Range of Individual Award: \$20,000

Number of Awards: 1 award

Funding: EPA anticipates providing funding in the amount of \$20,000 for a year with an option to extend this grant without further competition for up to two years, providing up to a total of \$20,000 each additional year.

Project Period: December 2004 to December 2005

Supplemental Applications: Applications for supplemental awards of existing EPA assistance agreements will not be eligible to compete for this assistance

opportunity.

Type of Award: The Agency anticipates the award of a grant.

Anticipated Federal Involvement:

EPA and the Project Officer for this assistance agreement anticipate minimal involvement in the implementation of this work.

III. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants: Programs under CFDA 66.510 are available to each State, territory and possession, and Tribal nation of the United States, including the District of Columbia, for public and private State universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, State and local government departments, other public or private nonprofit institutions, and in some cases, individuals who have demonstrated unusually high scientific ability.

Cost Sharing Requirements: None.

Other Eligibility Criteria:

Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of nonprofit in OMB Circular A-122. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. Universities and educational institutions must be subject to OMB Circular A-21.

Groups of two or more eligible applicants may choose to form a coalition and submit a single application for this assistance agreement. Coalitions must identify which eligible organization will be the recipient of the assistance agreement, and which eligible organizations(s) will be subawardees of the recipient. Sub awards must be consistent with the definition of that term in 40 CFR 30.2(ff). The recipient must administer the assistance agreement, is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds, and will be the point of contact for the coalition. As provided in 40 CFR 30.2(gg), sub recipients are accountable to the recipient for proper use of EPA funding.

Coalitions may not include for profit organizations that will provide services or products to the successful applicant. For profit organizations are not eligible for sub awards. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement procedures of 40 CFR Part 30. The regulations also contain limitations on consultant compensation. Applicants are not required to identify contractors or consultants

in the proposal. Moreover, the fact a successful applicant has named a specific contractor or consultant in the proposal EPA approves does not relieve it of its obligations to comply with competitive procurement requirements or consultant compensation limitations.

Applications will be reviewed for eligibility during the Administrative Review (see Section V). Initial proposals from ineligible applicants will be returned without further review.

IV. Application and Submission Information

Address to Request Application Package: Kathie Stephens-Landers, US Environmental Protection Agency, National Exposure Research Laboratory, 944 E. Harmon Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89119. Application information is also available from the EPA/ORD/NERL website at <http://www.epa.gov/nerl/> under the heading Assistance Opportunities. This document, and any subsequent amendments, constitutes the entire Request for Initial Proposal.

Content and Form of Application Submission: At a minimum, the initial proposal shall consist of the following items:

1. A cover sheet that identifies the RFIP title and identification number (EPA-ORD-25352), name and address of applicant, point of contact, telephone number, e-mail address for the applicant, applicant's DUNS number (see Section VIII), and the date of the submission.

2. Technical proposal that discusses the approach to accomplishing the goals stated under Funding Priorities/Focus, the capabilities (in terms of personnel and facilities) of the applicant to complete the effort, the expected results from this effort, how the effort will advance and stimulate the public need, and how the results will be made available to the public and government. In developing the technical proposal, the applicant should focus on the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V and structure the proposal to address each of the criteria in the order listed.

The page limitation of the technical proposal is 18 double sided pages (36 pages total) with a minimum font size of 12, single-spaced. This page limitation should include all text, tables, figures, references, attachments, and appendices. In addition, a 2-page curriculum vitae should be included for the program manager and any other key personnel identified in the proposal.

3. A budget estimate must be provided for the base year and two additional years, if proposed, for the project that is broken down into direct labor, fringe benefits,

equipment, travel, other direct costs, and overhead with summaries for each year and the total for the entire project. Indicate any proposed cost sharing (not required).

4. A Quality Assurance Project Plan that outlines the steps that will be taken to adequately address this issue throughout the term of this study. (See the Agency's Quality Assurance website for guidance at: http://www.epa.gov/quality/qa_docs.html)

Initial proposals should be submitted in the original with 3 copies and should be double-sided.

Submission Date, Time, and Location: Because of security concerns, applications cannot be personally delivered. They must be sent through regular mail, express mail, or a major courier.

The following address must be used for regular mail, express mail, and couriers:

Kathie Stephens-Landers
US Environmental Protection Agency
National Exposure Research Laboratory
944 E. Harmon Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89119

To be considered timely, initial proposals must be received by 3:00 p.m. local time on 12/06/04 from the U.S. Postal Service or a major courier. Proposals should be sent to the attention of Kathie Stephens-Landers. Initial proposals received after the deadline will not be considered and will be returned to the submitter.

Intergovernmental Review: This assistance opportunity is subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants should contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out how to comply with the State's process. The names and addresses of the SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

Funding Restrictions: Funding for the award is expected to be at \$20,000.

Amendments: Amendments will be posted on this website and the due date for initial proposals will be extended if deemed appropriate.

Other Submission Requirements: None.

V. Application Review Information

Criteria: The criteria used to evaluate proposals include:

Administrative Review: All initial proposals will be subject to an administrative review to ensure that they conform with the requirements of this RFIP. EPA may reject any applications that fail to conform substantially with the requirements of this RFIP.

Relevance Review: Initial proposals that are found administratively acceptable will be subjected to a review for relevancy to EPA's mission to support advancement of environmental science. Initial proposals may be rejected if they are found to lack relevance. Examples include:

1. Proposal is deficient technically with no chance for consideration.
2. Proposal fails to advance the objectives stated in the solicitation even if successfully performed.
3. Proposal fails to demonstrate a public purpose of support and stimulation; i.e., it implies the primary purpose is to provide direct support to the Federal government.

Technical Review: Initial proposals that are found administratively acceptable and relevant shall be reviewed for technical merit against the following criteria.

1. Adequacy of technical approach. (20%)
2. Strength of the qualifications and experience of the organization and key personnel for implementing the technical approach. (25%)
3. Organization's plan for sustaining the subject area(s) that you are proposing on, given the understanding that EPA's assistance will cease after a maximum period of three years. (NOTE: Although EPA is not requiring a mandatory cost share, your approach to obtaining additional resources (cash/in-kind services) to successfully carry out this program will be a factor in ranking applications. Applications are encouraged to provide specific information regarding resources that they, or a project partner, would commit. EPA will consider the nature and firmness of these commitments as part of this ranking factor.) (15%)
4. Organization's Quality Assurance Project Plan to assure quality of information throughout this project. (20%)
5. Cost effectiveness of the proposed budget to complete the subject area(s) that you are proposing on in an efficient manner. (20%)

Other Factors: None

Review and Selection Process:

Evaluation Process: The administrative and relevancy reviews will be conducted by EPA personnel who are not a part of the technical review panel. The technical review panel shall consist of at least one internal EPA reviewer and at least two non-EPA reviewers who are able to demonstrate technical expertise and a lack of any conflict of interest.

Source Selection: EPA will make a selection of the applicant for award based upon the rankings of the technical review panel and the other factors discussed above. The Decision Official is an Office of Research and Development (ORD) manager who will determine which applicant should receive the award.

Full Application: The applicant selected for award will be requested to submit a full, detailed application in accordance with the guidance provided by EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment (<http://www.epa.gov/ogd/>). After receipt of the full application, EPA may negotiate changes to the proposal with the selected applicant. For example, EPA will discuss significant comments received from the technical reviewers, aspects of the budget that may be questionable, and the proposed terms and conditions for the agreement.

Rejection Factors: Applications may be rejected because they fail to comply with the administrative requirements of the RFIP, they are found to lack relevancy, they are judged technically unacceptable, or they are not deemed suitable for award due to other factors (if identified). EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no awards.

Disputes: Disputes will be resolved pursuant to the process described in 40 CFR 30.63 and Part 31, subpart F.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates: The anticipated award date is April 6, 2005.

VI. Award Administration Information

Award Notices: Notice of award will be made in writing by an official in the EPA Grants Administration Division. Preliminary selection by the Decision Official in the Office of Research and Development does not guarantee an award will be made. Applicants are cautioned that only a grants officer can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of EPA should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with an EPA Program Official. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed

by the EPA Grants Award Official does so at their own risk.

EPA will promptly notify in writing via email those applicants whose initial proposal is rejected. An unsuccessful applicant may request a debriefing to better understand the evaluated strengths and weaknesses of its proposal and the reason for rejection if other than technical merit.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Regulations and OMB Coverage:

Grants and agreements with institutions of higher education, hospitals, and other non-profit organizations are subject to 40 CFR Parts 30 and 40 and OMB Circular A-122 for non-profits and A-21 for institutions of higher learning.

Grants and agreements with state, local, and tribal governments are subject to 40 CFR Parts 31 and 40 and OMB Circular A-87.

Programmatic Terms and Conditions: Terms and conditions will be negotiated with the selected recipient covering the following requirements:

An acceptable quality assurance document, i.e., Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), shall be due within 45 calendar days of award.

To further the assistance-agreement objectives of public support and stimulation, applicants must agree to make information resulting from this agreement accessible to the public and to EPA researchers.

Reporting:

Quarterly Annual Reports: The selected recipient will be required to submit an annual report summarizing technical progress, difficulties encountered, and planned activities for the next year. Each report shall include a summary of expenditures.

Final Report: The selected recipient will be required to submit a final report within 90 calendar days of the completion of the period of performance.

VII. Agency Contact

The primary agency contact for this RFIP is Kathie Stephens-Landers at:
US Environmental Protection Agency
National Exposure Research Laboratory
944 E. Harmon Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Telephone: 702-798-2134
E-mail: stephens-landers.kathie@epa.gov

If unable to reach Ms. Stephens-Landers, contact Mr. Walt Stutts at:

Telephone: 513/569-7487
Telefax: 513/569-7424
E-mail: stutts.walter@epa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Questions: Questions should be submitted in writing by November 22, 2004. Do not attempt to seek information regarding this RFIP from any source other than those identified in Section VII as the information provided may be erroneous. Questions that are considered significant will be answered via an amendment to this RFIP.

Confidential Information: Clearly mark information considered to be confidential. EPA will make final confidentially decisions in accordance with Agency regulations at 40 CFR, Part 2, Subpart B. As noted above, initial proposals for research and demonstration projects will be provided to at least two non-EPA consultants for review. All reviewers will be required to sign confidentiality agreements certifying that they will keep all deliberations confidential, they will not copy any portions of any material provided by EPA for review, and they will return all material to EPA upon request. If you are unwilling to allow non-EPA consultants to review your proposal, please advise us of your decision in a cover letter to your proposal.

DUNS Number: Grant applicants are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements. OMB has determined that there is a need for improved statistical reporting of Federal grants and cooperative agreements. Use of the DUNS number government-wide will provide a means to identify entities receiving those awards and their business relationships. The identifier will be used for tracking purposes, and to validate address and point of contact information.

A DUNS number will be required whether an applicant is submitting a paper application or using the government-wide electronic portal (Grants.gov). The DUNS number will supplement other identifiers required by statute or regulation, such as tax identification numbers. Organizations can receive a DUNS number in one day, at no cost, by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705- 5711. Individuals who would personally receive a grant or

cooperative agreement award from the Federal government apart from any business or non-profit organization they may operate are exempt from this requirement. The website where an organization can obtain a DUNS number is: <http://www.dnb.com>. This takes 30 business days and there is no cost unless the organization requests expedited (1-day) processing, which includes a fee of \$40.